

Prompt: On a separate sheet, please describe a specific class or class activity you planned and actually conducted which illustrates your philosophy of teaching and is the best example of your teaching skill. What evidence showed you that this class or activity was successful in terms of your student motivation and achievement.

During my practicum experience, one of the classes I was privileged enough to teach was a freshman humanities class; a combination of both English and Social Studies. At one point in the semester, the class was reading John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. I designed an activity in which students drew a character from the novel and wrote traits of that character around them. They were instructed to use quotes from the book and to also write down any questions or predictions that they had regarding the character. I also made the rule that students could not use Lenny or George. This challenged students to examine characters other than the main characters which we had talked about extensively in class. After everyone had finished their assignments, the students shared what they had created with the class.

The students really liked the exercise. I think drawing and other creative projects are essential for students' development. This exercise helped the students organize all that they've learned about a given character and learn about the characters their classmates chose as well. This type of exercise can be employed to help students note what they have learned and are curious about, but it can also help them note instances of a particular literary device, image, or theme. For example, you could have students do a quick sketch of the farm that Lenny and George are always talking about owning someday throughout the novel. Around the sketch, students could find quotes about the farm, questions, and predictions. This activity works because it's not overwhelming for students, and it can be done individually or even in pairs or small groups.

The students used their knowledge that they gained about the characters in *Of Mice and Men* to later on write essays about the novel. Several students mentioned that they found the exercise helpful because they were able to pull quotes from the exercise that they used as evidence in their essay. I think that it's really important, especially for freshmen, to help them write essays step by step. Helping them to understand key characters, themes, imagery, or settings helps them generate their thesis, but asking them to pull out quotes from the texts helps to refine their insights and serve as a building block for their future writing.